

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER'S PITY

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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.”
Psalm 103:13

WHAT a blow this is for our pride! Then, God's children are pitiable objects, notwithstanding that He has crowned them with glory and honor, has given them perfection in Christ Jesus, has breathed into them the breath of spiritual life, has set their feet upon a rock, and established their goings—yet they are and they always will be, so long as they are here below—pitiable objects.

It is like tolling the death-knell of all our pride, to talk about God pitying us. Why, my brethren, we shed our pity profusely upon the ungodly—we are often pitying the wicked, the profane, the blasphemer, and Sabbath-breaker—but here we find God pitying us. Even David, the mighty psalmist, is pitied. A prophet, a priest, a king—each of these shall have pity from God, for “He pities them that fear him,” and finds good reasons for pitying them, however high their station, however holy their character, or however happy their position. We are pitiable beings.

Oh! boast not, believer. Be not thou loud in praise of yourself. Put your finger on your lips and be silent when you hear that God pities you. The next time carnal security would creep in, or fleshly conceit would get the upper hand of you, remember that whilst you are boasting, God is pitying—and whilst you are triumphing, He is looking down upon you with a pitying eye of compassion, for He finds reason for compassion, when you can only see cause for glorying.

Our subject then, beloved, will be a review—a review of our lives—if we are the Lord's children and fear him. I hope it will be profitable to us. It will not be profitable through the newness of the thoughts, but rather by “stirring up your pure minds by way of remembrance,” to look back upon all the way whereby the Lord your God has led you.

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.” First of all, notice *the displays of this pity*. Then, *the spirit of this pity*. And then, lastly, note *the objects of this pity*.

I. Notice THE DISPLAY OF THIS PITY.

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.” When does a father display pity towards his child? I answer—on many and divers occasions.

Sometimes, *the father's pity is bestowed upon the child's ignorance*. He himself knows a thing which is to his child a profound mystery. He himself knows a certain truth, which is to him an axiom and an element of his knowledge. But to his child it seems like the apex of the pyramid of knowledge—he wonders how he can ever attain to so high a pitch of learning.

And oh, how foolish are the child's surmises! How long he is guessing at truth and how mistaken are the axioms which he founds upon his mistakes of thought! And how the father pities the child if he falls among bad companions who teach him errors. Who, instead of filling his mind with truth, fill it with falsehood!

When he comes to his father with all those strange stories, with which wicked men have filled his little ears, the father pities him that he should be so ignorant as to be carried away by every wind of tattling—that he should receive every talker into his confidence and believe everything because man has said it, taking every man's opinion and believing what any man declares to be right!

So, when, in the plentitude of our supposed wisdom, we think ourselves infallible, God looks down on our wisdom as being childish folly. When, in the glory of our wondrous eloquence, we talk great things, God looks down upon us as upon the prattler, who talks fast, but talks foolishly. And often, when we come before our fellows and spread before them wondrous discoveries that we have made, He that sits in the heavens does not laugh in derision, but He smiles in compassion that we should think ourselves so wise in having discovered nothing, and so supremely learned in having found out untruths.

And how God must pity His dear family when He finds them led astray by false doctrine and error! How many there are of God's people who go up to houses of prayer, so-called, where, instead of hearing the truths of the kingdom of heaven, they are taught all kinds of strange things—where they hear “another gospel, which is not another, but there are some that trouble them.”

Where all the isms and fancies of man are preached, instead of the truth of God, in all its discrimination, in all its power, in all its constancy and everlastingness, and the power of its application to the soul by the Spirit of God is sought for. How God pities some of His children who are thus led astray!

One of them, perhaps, says of their minister, “Is he not intellectual? Is he not a wonderful minister? Though he said nothing about Jesus Christ, today, yet it was such a clever discourse! It is true, he did not preach God's Gospel, but then, see how beautifully he cleared up that point of metaphysics! It is quite certain that he did not lead me to hold more fellowship with my Redeemer, but then how excellent was that distinction which he drew between those two similar terms which he employed! I never heard a man so clever as my minister. I cannot go and hear any of those vulgar preachers who talk to their hearers in a way that servant girls and mechanics can understand. I like to hear my minister, for he is so profoundly wise, that I do not believe there are many people in the chapel beside myself who can appreciate him! I will still go and hear him, dear man, though he does so puzzle me, sometimes, that I do not know what on earth he is after, and when he has finished his discourse, it has been such a perplexing one, that I have lost my way, and said, ‘Dear me, the time is gone, and I wonder what the sermon has been all about!’”

God pities His children when they are in this position. He does not pity them when they hear the truth—when they have real Gospel fare, however roughly the meat may be carved, and however it may be served up on the coarsest platter that human speech can supply. He pities them not when they get such spiritual food as that—but He does pity them when they are misguided, when they are carried away by “philosophy, falsely so called,” being misled by the seeming wisdom of man, which, after all, is but folly, having nought of wisdom in it—the highest wisdom being that of believing what God has said, receiving God's truth simply as God's truth and asking no questions about it. God pities His children, however, in all their ignorance. He is not angry with them, nor does He speak sharply to them, but He leads them on by His Spirit until they understand His truth and receive His Word.

It were well, however, if there were nothing else but ignorance to bear with, but the parent often has something worse than that to suffer from his child—he has to endure *the disobedience and waywardness of human nature*. There is the continual uprising of evil passions, the perpetual proneness to disobedience, the frequent wandering from the path of righteousness, and oftentimes, the father has to pass that by with, perhaps, just a little admonition, but without a frown, without a sharp word, without a blow—he has to say, “My child, it is all forgiven you”—and though his temper may be sorely tried, yet he has patience with his child, for he pities the child's disobedience.

He knows, too, that he was once a child himself, and then he did the same as his child is now doing, and therefore does he have patience with his child, and he pities him. My brethren, what pity has the Lord had upon you and me, in all our wanderings! How often have we gone astray and yet, compared with our wanderings, how seldom have we been chastised!

How frequently have we broken His commandments and rebelled against His covenant, and yet how light have been the strokes of chastisement, compared with the weight of our guilt, and how seldom has He afflicted us, compared with the frequency of our transgressions! How has He had patience with all

our shortcomings and has bidden His hand be still, when, if it had been like ours, it would have risen in hot anger to smite us to the dust!

Truly, He has pitied us, “like as a father pitieth his children,” only with a far greater patience. Even as He is Himself infinitely greater than all earthly fathers, so has His pity been more continuous, more patient, and more long-suffering than the pity of any human parent who has ever breathed.

And as a father pitieth his child, not only in all his frowardness, but *in all his actual transgressions and downright sin*—when he grows from the mere wish to do evil up to the actual commission of the crime—like as a father still pities his child, even when his follies have ripened into the worst of guilt, so has God pitied us, my brethren and sisters, when we have gone into gross sin before our conversion.

Ay, and some of us even after it. When we have gone astray like lost sheep, have broken the hedges of His commands, and have gone rambling over the dark hills of transgression, still has He had pity upon us. It is amazing how far a father's pity will go towards his child, even when he has transgressed never so much.

There are some who have shut the door in their children's face and bidden them never enter their house again, nor come near them. They have ceased to speak of them, for they have determined that they would never take their names on their lips again, nor consider them their children.

But such fathers are, I trust, very few in number. It is rarely that we meet with them. A father usually endures much and endures long. After he has had the peace of his home destroyed and his grey hairs almost brought with sorrow to the tomb, after his family has been made a wreck and he has lost almost everything he had, by the profligacy of his son—still his love, tenacious to the last, holds to his boy and will not let him go.

And even when others speak harshly of him, the old man palliates his son's guilt—perhaps a little foolishly—but if he can find an excuse for him, he does. He will not have it that his son is worse than others and he will allow no man to make his son's guilt appear greater than it is—in fact he will, as far as he can, try to make it seem less.

Our heavenly Father is not foolishly pitiful, but He is pitiful. Ay, and He is better than that. He is wisely pitiful over the most erring of His children. Our God is no Arminian god—the Arminian's god is a pitiless god to his children. He is represented as being pitiful enough to all the world, but pitiless to his own children, for according to the teaching of some, when they sin, he cuts them out of the covenant. And if they transgress, he bundles them out of doors, tells them they are not his children any longer and because of their transgressions, he will have it that they are none of his and shall be damned at last, despite the fact that Christ has died for them, that the Holy Spirit has regenerated them, and that they have been justified. He casts them away from his presence and they are to be lost forever. He is a pitiless god, but the god of these people is no relation to our God.

We do not believe in their god, nor do we fear him, nor bow before him. Our God is constant in His affection and merciful towards His children. When they go astray, He pities all their guilt and sin. It is true, He takes the rod in His hand and sometimes causes us to weep bitterly by reason of the soreness of His chastisement. He applies the rod to our very soul and brings the iron into our inmost spirit.

He makes us smart, and cry, and groan, and sigh, but all He does is in pity, because He is determined to save them. He will not let them go unpunished, because He pities them for their folly and their sin. Just as the physician will not let the man go without his medicine, because he pities him in his disease, so God will not let His children go without His chastisement, because He pities them in their sin.

And mark, too, even that chastisement is one of pity—there is not one twig too many in the rod, nor one stroke over the right number, nor one drop of gall too much—and that drop is none too bitter. The affliction is all measured out, and weighed in balances and scales, all given as it should be—no more than what is a needs-be for. God pities His children in all their chastisement and pities them in all their guilt and wanderings—and He will not let them go away from Him altogether, nor will He suffer them to perish, for He pities them still.

God also pities His children *in sickness*. That is a time when a father pitieth his children very much. It does not say, "Like as a mother pities her children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him." And I think the reason is not because a mother's pity is less intense, or less affectionate—for it is more so, by far—but because it is sometimes less effectual than the father's.

A mother may pity her child, yet she may not be able to preserve it from an enemy. The mother may pity her child when it is sick, but she may be alone in the house and she may not be able to travel far enough to find a physician, and therefore God has put in, not merely the affection, but the strength of pity. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him."

On the bed of sickness, the strength of pity is proved by Christ upon God's people. He does not stand, as the mother would, to weep over the child, but He does more than that. He does give true compassion, He does sympathize, but more than that, He heals! He makes the wounded spirit whole. He removes the aching pain from the conscience, binds up the broken heart, makes the weak to be strong, and the faint one to rejoice!

He gives us the strength of pity and some of us can remember that strength of pity when, in our sickness, we lay tossing in our beds, without hardly power to pray—when we said our heart and our flesh had failed us, and we must die. When our brain was racked with discordant thoughts and reason seemed to have left its throne, and blank despair held carnival within our brain, which, for a while, was under the dominion of the Lord of Misrule and revelry was kept up there perpetually.

It was then, when we could do nothing, that Jesus came to us, not merely with the faint whispers of compassion, but with the strong voice of healing, bade our fears be still, comforted our aching heart, and then made our flesh leap for joy because our spirit, its twin sister, which had been broken on the wheel, was delivered from the tormentor and made perfectly whole. Thus the LORD pities His children. He specially pities us in all our sicknesses.

And my brethren, your heavenly Father pities you who are His children under all your *manifold trials*, of whatever kind they are, and from whatever quarter they proceed. Thus, when persecuted, you have had His pity—when the jeer and taunt of the ungodly have been cast upon you—and when worse than that has been attempted against your person.

When you have had to bear the brunt of poverty, you have had God's pity shed upon you. And you have had a pity, too, that was not barely that of words—you have had the pity of help. He has given you your bread in your extremity and made your water sure when the brook was dry. You who have lost your friends and have had to weep over numerous bereavements.

You who have mourned over your family, who have been swept away one after another, not once have you been bereaved without the pity of your God. Never once has the clay fallen on the coffin lid, with the sad message, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," without the pity of your God falling on your heart, like gentle dew from heaven. He has ever pitied you in your low estate. He has been ever with you in all your varied troubles and has never left you.

"Mid scenes of confusion and creature complaints,"—

He has kept by your side and led you all your journey through. And here you can raise your Ebenezer and write the words of our text upon it, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him, and He has pitied me up to this hour."

Yet once more, sometimes God's people have wrongs and a father pitieth His children, *if they have wrongs that are unrevenged*. I know a father who sometimes says, "If you strike me, you may strike me again. and I will turn to you the other cheek, and you may smite me as long as you please. But" says that good man, and he is a man of peace, too—like myself, a thorough man of peace, though a little inconsistent—"strike my children and I will knock you down, if I can! I will not have you meddle with them. If you hit me, I will not resist you. You may do what you please with me. But if you smite my children, that I can never endure. I love them so, that I should break through every principle to resent it.

So strong is my natural affection for them, that though I might conceive myself to be wrong in what I did, I should do it, most certainly."

Depend upon it, there is nothing brings a man's wrath up like touching his children. And the same thing is true of God. You may curse Him and He will not be so angry with you as if you touch His children. The prophet Zechariah declared to His ancient people, "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." If any of you want to know the shortest road to damnation, I will tell you—despise God's little ones. Treat God's people ill and you will damn yourself by express. Remember our Lord's words, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

There never was a wrong done to one of God's people that God did not avenge. There has never been an ill deed done towards them yet but He has punished the doer of it. Though He suffered Assyria to break Israel in pieces, yet let Assyria speak, when she rises from her tomb, and tell how terribly God has shivered her with a rod of iron, because she vaunted herself against the people of the Most High.

Let old Rome testify that on her still rests the blood of the martyrs. Behold, our God has broken her empire in pieces. The Roman emperor has ceased to exist and his gaudy pomp is gone. Ay, and modern Rome, too, has an awful doom yet to come—she, above all other cities—has a fearful future before her. She, that is wrapt in scarlet and sits on the seven hills, the whore of Babylon, drunk with the blood of the saints, shall yet meet the doom foretold in the Revelation.

Lo! God has said it. She shall be rent in pieces. She shall be burnt with fire and utterly consumed. God might have forgiven her if it had not been for the blood of the martyrs—but the blood of His children cries out against her and the curse of God rests upon her. The Church of Rome can never again be put in the ranks of Christian churches.

God has forgiven other churches their sins, and despite errors in their doctrine and their practice, He has kept them among the living churches. But of the Romish Babylon He has said, "She has made her garments red with the gore of my children; she hath stained her hands with the blood of the saints; she shall be cut off, once for all, and be for ever cast away. Come out of her, my people, lest ye be partakers of her plagues, and share in her fearful doom!"

God pities His children. No martyr has died unpitied, nor shall any martyr die unavenged. Springing from their graves, they cry, "Revenge, revenge, upon the apostate Church of Rome!" And it shall be had. Lo! The souls of the saints beneath the altar cry, "How long, O Lord, how long?" Not long shall it be. The sword is being made ready in heaven. 'tis furbished and the God that pities them that fear Him shall not let His hand spare, nor His eye pity, when He comes to avenge Himself upon the church that has dyed its garments with the blood of His elect.

II. And now, dear friends, leaving that part of the subject, I want you briefly to notice THE SPIRIT OF GOD'S PITY.

There are different sorts of pity. Some I would not have at any price whatever. Did you ever see *the pity of contempt*? Have you not often seen a gentleman watching a poor man doing something or other, and then saying to him, "Poor fellow, I do pity you"? Have you ever seen a very respectable aristocrat, who has never heard anything but the most "proper" kind of preaching, turn on his heel and go out of a chapel door, saying, "Well, I do pity people who can listen to such stuff as that"?

We have often seen that pity of contempt. But that is not God's kind of pity. He never pities His people in the way of contempt and a father never so pities his children. Sometimes, when a boy is writing a copy, a stranger goes through the school and says, "Well, he is an ignoramus," and he pities him, perhaps—but there is a sneer with his pity.

But the lad's father comes into the room. The boy has just got into pot-hooks and hangers, and the father thinks he makes them very well for such a little boy. He pities him, perhaps, that he is not able to write better, but there is no contempt with his pity. Nor is there any contempt with God's pity—He sees what we are and pities us—but there is not a solitary grain of contempt for any of His people in His pity.

Other people's pity is *the pity of inaction*. "Oh, I do pity you very much!" says a person to a sick woman, "your husband is dead, your children have to be supported, and you have to work hard. Well, my good woman, I pity you very much, but I cannot afford to give you anything. I have so many calls upon me." How much pity there is of that kind in the world!

You can get pity of that sort in abundance. If you lift the knocker of the first door you come to, you will get plenty of pity of that kind. Pity is the cheapest thing in the world if that is all. But God's pity is not pity of that sort—it is not the pity which is mere pity, it is not the pity of inaction—but when His heart moves, His hands move, too, and He relieves all the wants of those He pities.

And let me say, again, God's pity is not *a pity of mere sensitiveness*. The other day a gentleman, talking of accidents, said in my hearing, "I saw a boy running down a lane, where a cab was coming at a very rapid rate. I saw that the boy must be crushed under the horse's feet, or under the wheels. I stood for a moment thunderstruck and then I saw him crushed to pieces under the wheels! I ran down the next street in a moment. I was so sensitive, I could not bear the sight."

Instead of seeing what help he could give, he ran away. "Yet," he said, "I did not do that from any lack of sympathy, or any lack of pity, and when I stopped myself, I thought it useless to go back, for I am so sensitive that I naturally avoid every sight of misery." That is not God's way of showing pity. His pity is not the pity of the stranger who ran away.

If that had been his own boy, he would have stopped, and seen what was the matter, and tried to render assistance. But God's pity is the pity of the father—it is not the pity of the mere sensation of the moment, but the pity which desires to do something to relieve his children in distress.

*"The pity of the Lord,
To those that fear His name,
Is such as tender parents feel;
He knows our feeble frame."*

Then, tried believer, take your case before your God tonight in prayer. He is a God of pity and not a God of mere pity. Go to Him now if you are poor. Tell Him all your care and see if He will not help you. Go and tell Him that your spirit is depressed and see if He will not cheer you. Tell Him that your way is hedged up and that you cannot find your path, and see if He will not direct you.

Tell Him you are ignorant and know nothing, and see if He will not teach you. Tell Him you have fallen and see if He will not set you on your feet, take you by the arm, and teach you to go. Tell Him you are black by reason of your falls—and see if He will not wash and cleanse you. Tell Him that you cut yourself against a stone when you fell and see if He will not bathe your sores.

Tell Him you are distressed because you have sinned, and see if He will not kiss you with the kisses of His love and tell you He has forgiven you. Go and try Him, for His pity is a heavenly pity. It is the very nard of Paradise that heals sores effectually.

III. I close, by noticing THE PEOPLE WHOM GOD PITIES. Who are the objects of God's pity? "The LORD pitieth *them that fear him*."

Some of you He does not pity at all—you that do not fear him, but trifle with Him. You that hate Him. You that despise Him. You that are careless about Him. You that never think of Him—you have none of His pity. When you are sick, He looks upon your sickness as something that you deserve. When you go astray, He looks upon your wandering as a mere matter of course of your guilty nature—and He is angry with you—wrathful with you.

Your afflictions are not strokes of His rod, they are cuts of His sword. Your sins are not things that He overlooks, but if you die as you now are, guilty and unsaved, remember that even when you are cast away by God, justice shall look upon you with a tearless eye and say to you, "You knew your duty, but you did it not." And the stern voice of God shall, because you have been desperately guilty, drive you away from His presence forever.

Think not that this text will afford you any consolation in this life or in that which is to come. You shall not have even a drop of water to cool your tongue in hell—no pity shall be shed upon you there. If you could have pity bestowed upon you in the regions of your punishment, it might fall like a shower of gentle rain upon your tongues. But God bestows no pity upon you that love Him not, and fear Him not, and turn not from the error of your ways.

Oh, that you would but fear Him! Would to God that He would make you fear Him now! Oh, that you would tremble at His presence and then, oh, that you could know yourselves to be His children and fear Him as children do their parents! Oh, that you did reverence His name and keep His Sabbaths! Oh, that you did obey His commandments and have His fear always before your eyes!

Then should your peace be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Oh, that you were wise to bow yourselves before Him and to confess your guiltiness! Oh, that you would come, “just as you are, without one plea,” to Jesus Christ! Oh, that you were stripped of every rag of self-righteousness and clothed in the righteousness of Christ!

Then you would have Christ as your Savior and you might rejoice that, henceforth, He would pity you in all your sicknesses and in all your wanderings. He would pity you here, and at last lead you up to be where pity shall be unneeded—in the land of the blessed, in the home of the hereafter, where the weary rest and the wicked cease from troubling.

But they do not cease from trouble. In hell, they are troubled without pity, and pained without compassion, scourged without any leniency, and damned without an iota of mercy, being left to stern justice and inflexible severity. Seeing that they would not turn at God's reproof and would not heed His warnings, but cast His truth behind their back—seeing that, being often reproofed, they hardened their necks—they were, therefore, “suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.”

Seeing that they have destroyed themselves, seeing that they have rejected the invitations of the Gospel, seeing that they have despised the Son of God, seeing that they have loved their own righteousness better than Christ's, and preferred hell to heaven, the penalties of iniquity to the reward of the righteous—therefore, without pity they shall be shut away, forever, from the regions of happiness, and banished from the presence of Him who pities them that fear Him, but punishes them that fear Him not.

The Lord save us all from such a terrible doom as that, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 25

Verse 1. *Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.*

It is down and I would gladly lift it up, yet I am powerless to do so if I am left to myself. When the soul cleaves to the earth, who but God can lift it up? Yet it must be our desire and object to seek to lift up our soul unto God.

2. *O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.*

Whatever happens to me, I trust in You. Down goes the anchor—that ship will never drift far out to sea. “O my God, I trust in thee.” Can you say that, dear friends? Then, if you are in the dark, you are as safe as if you were in the light, for still this anchor holds. “O my God, I trust in thee.”

“Let not mine enemies triumph over me.” They will do so, if they can get me back into the world. If they can seduce me from the paths of holiness, what shouts of joy there will be in the camp of the enemy! “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.”

3. *Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.*

When good men are in earnest on their own account, they soon begin to pray for others, and the evil which they dread for themselves, they are sure to dread for their brethren. David first prayed, “Let me not be ashamed.” And then he added, “Let none that wait on thee be ashamed.” The only shame that is

worth having is a blessed shame—the shame of true repentance which sorrows over past sin, of which it is ashamed. Alas! there will be an eternal shame which shall cover those who choose the ways of sin.

4. *Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.*

That is the prayer of one who is taught of the Spirit, for by nature, our desire is to have our own way, and if we can have our own way, we are satisfied. But when the Lord has taught us better, our prayer is, “Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths.”

5. *Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.*

We need not only to have the path shown to us, but to be led into it, for we are like babes just learning to walk—we must have a finger that we may hold or a hand that we may lean upon. “Lead me in thy truth, and teach me.” That is the second time that David has prayed for the Lord to teach Him—and as long as we are here, we also shall need to pray, Teach me.

What is a disciple but a learner? His daily cry must be, “Teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation.” There is another grip of the hand of faith. I have taken You to be my salvation, O my God! I trust nowhere else, “On thee do I wait all the day,” expecting everything from You—tarrying Your leisure, but tarrying hopefully, expecting to be blessed.

6. *Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old.*

Your saints knew them before I was born, and I have known them since I have been born again. By the constancy of Your kindness to me to hitherto, continue to bless me, for are You not an unchanging God?

7. *Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.*

In this verse and the preceding one, there are three “remembers”—first, that God would remember His tender mercies and His lovingkindnesses. Next, that He would not remember our sins and our transgressions, and then, that He would remember us according to His mercy and goodness. This last request may remind us of the prayer of the dying thief, “Lord, remember me.” And it may serve for us as a repenting prayer. “According to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.”

8. *Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.*

If good men endeavor to make others good, much more will the good God do so. A good man will seek to lead sinners in the right way and much more will our good Savior, and God, and Helper do so. Only let us be willing to be taught and come to Him confessing our ignorance, and asking to be led and instructed. This Psalm, you see, dear friends, is all about teaching—and as David needed instruction, so also do we. The next verse deals with the same subject.

9. *The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.*

Not the proud man, but the meek—the learners—the teachable ones. Those who, like little children, are willing to believe what they are told upon true authority. Oh, that we all may be among the meek! The tender-mouthed horse is easy to drive, but some people are so stubborn and obstinate that they are “as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.” Oh, that we were sensitive to the slightest touch of the divine hand, and always ready and anxious to be instructed by the Lord.

10. *All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.*

Do you believe that, you who have been sorely tried? If you are resting in covenant love, and find your hope in covenant blood and covenant promises, you must believe that everything God does to you is done in mercy and truth. Ay, though He strikes till every blow of the rod leaves a blue wound, yet we rejoice in these tokens of His fatherly love and desire for our highest good, for He has said, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” The word “love” in that passage conveys the idea of a very tender and ardent affection.

11. *For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.*

Those who are not taught of God pray very differently from that, for their prayer is, "O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is little." But he who is graciously instructed confesses the greatness of his guilt and out of that he draws a plea for mercy, for is not God a great God, and is it not greatly to His glory to pardon great sinners? And when they are pardoned, are they not filled with a great love and a great zeal, so that they are greatly serviceable to their Lord and Master?

12. *What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.*

True reverence for God, a holy fear of Him, is a quality that God delights to see. And wherever He finds it, there He gives further instruction.

13-14. *His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth. The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.*

Are you one of those trembling ones who fear to offend God? Well, I daresay that you sometimes envy those who are very boisterous in their joy. Do not envy them—you have something better in having that holy, filial fear that trembles at God's Word—and you shall have the secret of the Lord with you and He will show you His covenant.

15. *Mine eyes are eyes toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.*

When they get into it, He will pluck them out of it. When Satan seems to cast a net over me, God will come and pull me out. There is force in that word "pluck"—denoting swiftness and energy. Perhaps, also, there is a little idea of roughness, but God's roughness is true tenderness.

16. *Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.*

If you pass that dish round, there are some who will not help themselves from it, for they are not "desolate and afflicted." But I know that there are some, even here, who are both "desolate and afflicted." Be sure, dear friends, that you make this prayer your own—"Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted."

17-18. *The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain;*

And what follows? "Take the affliction and the pain away"? No.

18. *And forgive all my sins.*

David will be quite content if God will but look with pitying eyes upon his sufferings, but as for his sins, he must be clean rid of them—he cannot be happy until he has the answer to this petition—"Forgive all my sins."

19. *Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.*

The better the man, the more bitterly is he hated by the ungodly. It is not by holiness that you will escape the hatred of the world—it is by that very thing that you will arouse its malice. Do not wish to have it otherwise, but remember your Lord's own words, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets."

But "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets."

If we live near to God and are truly the seed of the woman, the seed of the serpent will constantly be nibbling at our heels—some little viper or other will be sure to be there. As the great serpent seeks to do us injury, so will his seed.

20. *O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.*

Do you notice how David gets back to his keynote? Almost at the beginning of the Psalm, he said, "O my God, I trust in thee." Now he says "I put my trust in thee." Let faith in God be the keynote of your life-psalm. At another time, David wrote, "Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." That is the motto for all Christians—"Trust, *trust*, TRUST." When there is nothing to be seen, when you are in thick Egyptian darkness, let Job's confident declaration be the resolve of your spirit, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

21. *Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.*

The child of God cannot hope to pass through the world safely unless he is careful to keep his integrity and his uprightness. There are some who profess to be Christians, who try to get on in trade by various tricks—and they hope to win the favor of men by just bending a little to their ways. Never do so, beloved. If you give way an inch, you will have to give way a yard or a mile before long.

22. *Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.*

God did so to Israel Himself. Jacob, whose name was also, Israel, said, “All these things are against me,” yet God redeemed him out of his troubles. And so will the Lord do for all His people in due time, glory be unto His name, world without end! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.